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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2437  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 0213  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0770  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 3283  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 0156  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 1206  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 013462

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DEPARTMENT FOR OPERATIONS CENTER, EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: ACEH HOLDS FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS, THE FIRST  
SINCE HELSINKI MOU

¶1. Summary: The U.S. Mission in Indonesia fielded a team of 40 U.S. officials and local support staff to monitor the gubernatorial and district administrative elections in the Indonesian province of Aceh on December 11. Embassy's press release, below, provides our endorsement of the election process, an assessment which is shared by domestic monitoring groups and other foreign observer delegations. Scattered problems, primarily with registration, do not appear to have been extensive enough to affect the outcome of the election. Counting is still under way, but early indications are that former GAM leader Irwandi Yusuf appears to have taken the lead and may have enough votes to win without a second round. End Summary.

¶2. U.S. ELECTION OBSERVATION TEAM STATEMENT  
ON GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS ON DECEMBER 11, 2006  
IN ACEH PROVINCE, INDONESIA

The United States Embassy congratulates the people of Aceh for their historic exercise of democracy on December 11, which proceeded in a largely free, fair and peaceful manner in areas observed by the U.S. election observation team. This first truly democratic election in Aceh in half a century is an important step in the transition from conflict to peace, stability and self-governance within Aceh. It builds upon the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding of August 2006 and the Law on the Governance of Aceh of July ¶2006. The people of Aceh and the people of Indonesia as a whole can rightly take pride in this achievement.

The U.S. team, which consisted of 40 persons accredited by the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs and the Aceh Electoral Commission (KIP), observed gubernatorial and district administrative elections. The observers deployed to the capital of Banda Aceh and 13 of the 19 contested districts on December 9, met with local officials on December 10 and witnessed voting and counting at polling stations on December 11. Ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe said these historic elections in Aceh "demonstrated the strong commitment of the people of Indonesia to democratic values and principles."

The U.S. team found the election environment and voting process generally free of intimidation and manipulation. Although confusion about registration and proper identification prevented some persons from voting at some polling stations, voting and counting proceeded without significant disruption or restriction on voter access to polls. The United States will share more detailed findings with the KIP.

The U.S. team noted the tremendous enthusiasm and support from the people of Aceh for the elections. Other important elements in the voting process included the commitment of the Provincial Government of Aceh, the leadership of the KIP, the diligence of the many domestic monitors, including the People's Voter Education Network, the NGO Forum, the E-card Community/Jurdil and the Independent Election Observer Committee, as well as the presence of the European Union and other international observers.

END U.S. EMBASSY JAKARTA PRESS STATEMENT

LOCAL MONITORING GROUPS GIVE ELECTION PROCESS THUMBS UP

13. The people's Voter Education Network (JPPR), a national NGO which ran the largest monitoring operation this election, observed 121 subdistricts in all of Aceh's districts. JPPR described the election as "smooth but with some irregularities" and noted that overall, the elections were "safe and peaceful." Nevertheless, they detailed numerous shortcomings based on lack of administrative preparation. They singled out incomplete voter lists as the most problematic element.

14. Jurdil Aceh, a local NGO supported in part by U.S. assistance, said people were able to vote freely and confidentiality of votes compared favorably with previous

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elections. Jurdil hailed the elections as "a new process for Aceh" but noted the democratic framework was not yet complete. There were several incidents of intimidation and other technical irregularities and two cases where Jurdil monitors were detained by the police and prevented from conducting their duties as observers. Jurdil praised the

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Indonesian police as a whole, as well as the military (TNI), for "having kept their word" by not interfering in the election.

15. The NGO Forum described election conditions in the province as "smooth, safe and conducive" and said there were no major incidents during the voting process. The organization judged the conduct of the election to be "much better" than anticipated.

16. The International Republican Institute (IRI) fielded a small observer mission. IRI's country representative told us their observers encountered the same kinds of procedural flaws reported by other missions but were "pleasantly surprised" to witness several cases where election officials used common sense, within the scope of the election regulations, to diffuse potential problems. The only significant problem encountered was at one polling station where tensions escalated when approximately 400 GAM sympathizers were denied ballots for improper identification.

17. According to the police, three polling stations had to close because of disruption by groups who had been denied poll access for lack of registration or documentation. The head of the Aceh Electoral Commission (KIP) acknowledged these incidents but pointed out this affected only three of over 8,000 stations throughout the province.

18. Several Acehese contacts, including senior election officials, emphasized this election could not be compared with previous elections in Aceh and was Aceh's first truly democratic election. In 2004, they asserted, the vast majority of voters felt pressured to vote by the military, which controlled the province under martial law. Voters who could not show a "purple finger" were harassed, and voters often chose to spoil their ballots rather than cast a vote for candidates backed by the military.

MAIN PROBLEM IS REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

¶9. Members of the official U.S. observation team observed high turnout at polling stations throughout the province and received good support from local officials. Rain in southeastern and central Aceh delayed polling station opening but voters appear to have been able to reach the polls before they closed.

¶10. By all accounts, the single biggest problem was voter registration. Difficulties had been expected and publicized, but the extent of the problem turned out to be greater than anticipated. Nevertheless, it does not appear to have been significant enough to affect the outcome of the election. KIP was unable to distribute registration cards to as many as ten percent of voters prior to the election. To compensate, KIP instructed local officials at the last minute to check registration lists and send letters of invitation to voters in their district. These invitations were to be used as proof of eligibility. Because not all of these invitations could be delivered in time, KIP also authorized local officials to permit persons whose names appeared on registration lists to vote if they could prove their identity. Several U.S. observers witnessed polling stations lacking voter registration lists. Others found stations which failed to check registration cards against voter registration lists to determine eligibility. Local monitoring groups similarly reported that affected voters were not uniformly successful in obtaining access on this basis. Most of these cases appear to have involved small groups of people, usually less than 100. Some monitors in Aceh Jaya reported as much as 30 percent of registered voters were unable to vote because of this. In Bireuen and Pidie districts local monitors reported persons being absent from voter registration lists without explanation.

PASCOE